# Rigved : Solving a Puzzle of The Dasas and Dasyus

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## Introduction:

**Rigved** is an ancient Sanskrit language text composed by the Priestly community people in the Mature Harappan period starting from 2200 to 1000 **B**efore **C**ommon **E**ra(BCE) mostly in the North-west region of Indian Sub-continents. Since it is considered as one of the oldest authentic literature the man has ever produced, it has attracted worldwide attention from the several experts of the different fields. But the fact is that the interpretation of many rigvdic terms/words vary from person to person and that too with his/her background. Therefore, we do not find unity among the various experts about the origin of the people, time period of the composition of the **Rigved** and as well as many characters that are present in the **Rigved**. For example; the term, **Nahusa** can be a name of a person but it actually means **Neighbourer.** Similarly, the word, **Yayati** is also a name of a person but it also means **Wanderer** or **Mover**. Hence the difference of perception of an individual gets automatically reflected into his/her interpretation as well. In the last 180 years, many experts have seriously studied and then translated the Original Rigvedic Text into various languages of the world. The broad classification of the various approaches used by the different Translators/Scholars is as given below,

### 1. Traditional Approach:

Most of the Brahmins or the persons from the Priestly community (commonly known as ***Pundits*** or ***Purohits***) who are familiar with Sanskrit language by way of performing various rituals since ancient times, use the traditional approach in presenting the Rigvedic literature as the ritualistic text only. Their understanding and explanation of the **Rigved,** generally exhibit it as the method of conducting Yajna/sacrifice, holding prayers in a group, chanting Rigvedic Mantras to invoke the Deities of their choices for the well being of the people and solving some problems of day to day life. Most of them go by faith and firmly believe that the **Rigved** is the first sacred text of **Hindu religion** created by the God.

### 2. Philosophical Approach:

Some serious thinkers of Indian and Foreign origin have tried to connect the **Rigved** to the modern-day Philosophy and some of them have made the claim that it is the oldest Philosophical literature in the world. One among them is **Sri Arobindo, who, through his books on selected hymns(discourses) "The Secret of the Veda"** and **"The Hyms to the Mystic Fire"** attempted to explain the philosophy behind the **Rigved. Sri Arobindo** sees many characters of the **Rigved** as the **symbolic representation** of the **human elements** and mother **Nature** and tells us that with an open mind they should be interpreted in a **spiritual way**.

### 3.Historical Approach:

The experts from the disciplne of **History**, look at the **Rigved** from different angles. They collect the information first, try to assess its usefulness and analyse the various characters and events mentioned in the **Rigved** from the historical perspective. Then they present their point of view in terms of so called facts and figures that are mainly based on the selective assumptions, but they define it as the most correct method of research. Here also we find two different views on the same subject, one calls the rigvedic People were the original inhabitants of the Indian Sub-continent and Sanskrit was their language but their opponents forcefully state that the rigvedic Priests/people migrated in batches from outside to Indus region where they got settled first at different locations and composed **Rigved** in their own language. The People from latter school always say that the during rigvedic period, there was mainly one way movement of the people i.e. from the west of Indian Sub-continent (from River Sindhu) to the east (towards River Ganga).

**4.Linguistic Approach;**

The modern linguistic scholars use the development of the spoken languages during different era as one of the basic tools for the evaluation of progress made by the man in the ancient world. Based on some similarities existing in a few European and Indian Languages, the philologists have formulated a theory which states that, earlier, there would have been a common language spoken by the people living in Eurasean Steppes region from whom most of the Indo-European languages would have got originated. They have defined that unknown language as the **Proto Indo-European** (PIE) Language, projected it as the foundation for all Indo-European languages. They have connected **Sanskrit** to it and other languages by creating a language tree of their liking. By considering PIE as the main source of the Sanskrit, the scholars have proposed that the Aryans or Rigvedic Priests who composed **Rigved** in Indian Sub-continent, would have migrated from **Eurasean Steppes** to the **Indus valley** somewhere between 2000 to 1500 BCE. But other persons who oppose it, feel that it is just a speculation or an absurd idea came from a few individuals who actively involved in propagation of the Aryan Invasion /Migration Theory.

Philologists try to find out roots of the various common words present in several languages, also study Syntax, Grammar and changes in the structure of spoken/written sentences with time and then try to ascertain the role of language development in the progress of mankind with time.

**5. Scientific Approach:**

Most of the experts who work in the field of Archaeology come under this category. It is well known fact that, the Archaeologists look for the factual material evidence unearthed during the excavations. They use very well accepted dating methods & standard practices to ascertain the time period of the events. In case of **Rigved**, since several generations, as the knowledge got orally tranferred from one generation to the next, there is no documentery evidence to verify the past. Hence Archaeologists do not have actual/direct evidence about the **Rigved**, but have to rely on the circustantial evidence unearthed from the Indus Valley sites that have been excavated since last 90 years just to prove or unprove whether rigvedic people originally belonged to Indus Valley or not. As usual, in this field also we find, some experts often saying "**Pots are not the People**" whereas, others state that as the Pottery is a manmade item, it reflects minds of the people who were behind its production. But still debate is going on, which may not come to an end in near future. However, till date, the Archaeologists could not produce any concrete evidence of migration of the people with their **typical material culture** from the West Asea /Persia or Bactria Marginia Archaeological Complex (BMAC) to Indian Sub-continent or Indus Valley.

Recently, some researchers from the field of **Genetic Science** have studied the genetic structure/pattern of the people from all over the world including Indian Sub-continents, but till date, they too did not get any clinching evidence of the major migration of genes(with people) from the West Asia or Eurasian Steppes/region to the Indus Valley.

**6. Common Man Approach:**

**The common People** from all walks of life also show interest in rigvedic literature and freely but periodically express their views on many aspects of the **Rigved** in an Elecronic Media or Print Media. This category includes many Seasoned Enthusiastics, some Amatuer, and or Freelance writers; and Casual Readers also. But some well established Authors and the Scholars from the different fields do not like this and call them as the "**Internet Specialists**" or "**Information Churners**". But in my view, some serious readers or individuals who challenged the experts and raised the doubts over the claims made by them in the past, were right in their contention. Sometimes, when a common man poses a question to an expert who can not answer it properly, that causes embarrassment to him and then he feels that the common men are the real trouble creaters.

In my opinion, we should encourage questioning by the common people that might bring out the points/things that were overlooked or totally neglected or remained untouched or unknown to

many scholars of the diiferent fields. As we are living in the Information World, we need to take the views expressed by others very sportively, whether we like them or not.

## Some Serious Questioning about the Dasas and Dasyus:

Some experts say that "**The Hymns of Rig Veda**" [1] translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith, is not very scholarly piece of work. It is also said that Griffith supported Aryans' Invasion/Migration Theory, but I find his translation simple and useful. Griffith has tried to retain the poetic form of original Sanskrit text by using some archaic English words wherever possible. Therefore, in the present article also, I am going to use it as my main source of information on the **Rigved**.

As usual, after going through the Hymns/Verses related to the Dasas and Dasyus, many questions came to my mind and that are as under;

**a**. Some **scholars** believe that **Aryans** were the outsiders in **Indus Valley** region but the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** were the original inhabitants /indigenous people of the **Indus Valley**, but then why did the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** attack the **Aryans** specifically while performing **Yajna** /Sacrifice ritual only? If they were so powerful tribes, then why or how did they allow the **Aryans** to move freely from one place to other ? or Why did they not stop the regular movements of **Aryans** during rigvedic period?

**b**. Some Hymns/Verses of **Rigved** indicate presence of both at the same time, same place and ; also together at the different locations(this is based on the presence of various rivers in the Mandalas). Many rigvedic verses also depict, as if, both used to strike the **Yajna** site simulteneously, how was it possible? Were Dasas and Dasyus friendly with each other? What made them to come together often? How they used to come to know about the activities of **Aryans'** ?

**c**. **Dasas** are present in nine out of ten mandalas, and **Dasyus** appear in all ten mandalas. This means to say that the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** have all-round presence in almost complete **Indus Valley**. Then the question is, why and how did the **Aryans** become a common target of both of them at the several places of Indus Valley? Before entry of **Aryans** into **Indus Valley**, what were they doing? During rigvedic period, other than attacking **Aryans**, what were their other routine activities?

**d.** Mandala-7 describes that the combination of King **Sudas** and **Trustu** defeats joint strength of the ten kings in the **War of Ten kings**. Similarly, why **Bharatas** could not replicate the same model to defeat the **Dasa** and **Dasyu** tribes completely?This could have easily solved the problem of their regular attacks once for all. Some hymns just indicate that **Divodasa** has destroyed Puras of Dasas.

**e.** In Mandala-7(Rv-7.18,7), along with other unknown tribes(i.e. the **Bhalanas**, the **Alinas**, the **Sivas**, the **Visanins**), the **Pakhtas** are defined as the enemies of **Sudas**. But in the verses of Mandala-8 (Rv-8.22,10 and Rv-8.93,10), **Pakhta** appears friendly with the **Priests** and others. In case of **Paktha**, who is not at all mentioned in four Early Mandalas, a **changeover** from **an enemy** to **a follower** was possible but same thing did not happen with **Dasa** and **Dasyu**, despite the fact that both are present in all Early Mandalas, Why? Why did **Dasas** and **Dasyus** remain hostile thoroughout the rigvedic period? Out of several tribes present in **Rigved**, why were the **Aryans** totally unable to control or tame the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** only?

**f**. Other than **Dasas** and **Dasyus,** is there any character in **Rigved** that regularly attacks the **Yajna** sites and disturbs the ritual frequently?

From the nature of the questions, it is very clear that my questioning is mainly based on the assumption that the **Aryans** were the intruders in the Indus Valley and the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** were already existing in that region( aboriginal people). This is because, since many years, there is an on-

going debate on this issue. The Proponets of Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory regularly use the description about the slaying and destruction of places of living of **Dasas** and **Dasyus** by **Aryans** as the main evidence to support their claim. They say that as just because **Aryans** were the outsiders, both tribes used to attack them regularly, then **Aryans** used to chase, kill and destroy their dwellings. But in the next paragraphs, we would get better clarity about the Dasas and Dasyus.

## Reality Check on Dasas And Dasyus:

From the rigvedic text, it is clear that the Dasas and Dasyus used to attack Yajna and disturb the ritual. This used to annoy the rigvedic Priests. As per my opinion, Yajna is a small scale duplication of the wild/forest fire that destroys many living things including plants and animals.

To perform Yajna systematically, one needs to have a fire altar first. Fire altar is a temperory structures which is generally built using the mud bricks in an open space that houses fire of Yajna. In Yajna, wood or dried plant remains are used to kindle the fire. As per the procedure, Grtra or Ghee is added to fire to enhance its intensity. In Yajna, many items are offered to the fire one by one and hence called as the **Sacrifice**.

**But the basic question is, what used to attract the Dasas and Dasyus at the site of Yajna?**

It is well known fact that due to its destructive power, everyone tries to keep safe distance from the **Fire**. Hence burning wood or fire would not attract the Dasas and Dasyus to the place of Yajna. In fact, it would deter them to go away from the place of Yajna.

Continously chanting of **Sanskrit** Hymns/Mantras or **Prayers** would also not attract both as the **Rigved** informs us that they used to speak language that was not known to the Priests.

Then various **food items kept near the fire for offerings** are the only possibility that could attract them to the place of worship. Sacrificial items made from the foodgrains (or grass used for seating purpose) would mainly attract the herbivorous animals like Cow, Bull, Goat, Sheep, Deer or Domesticated Dogs etc. But except bull, no other animal mentioned shows any aggressiveness towards human. It is very interesting to note that in **Rigved**, at some places, God **Indra's strength** is defined in terms of number of **Bulls**(Bull Power). However, the **Britishers** in the first decade of early eighteenth century(AD), introduced the **Horse-Power**( HP) as an unit of measurement of **Power**. **Rigved** also tells us that the Priests were very fond of **Cow** and female dog called as **Sarama** but not **Bull**. Symbolically, they have termed, **Asva/Horse** as the **quick mover** but nowhere described it as aggressive as a **Bull**. In other words, **Bull** is the real measure of Power/strength in **Rigved**.

When animal sacrifice is taken into consideration, then issue of attraction of the Dasas and Dasyus gets resolved immediately. To sacrifice any animal, it is necessary to kill it first. Slitting a throat of an animal using a sharp bronze blade is the one such possibility. Once the sacrificial animal is killed, then it was necessary to cut its flesh into small pieces as it is not possible to offer a big size animal like cattle in one piece to fire. The parts of the body that have little or no flesh such as legs, tail, carcass, head, horn, skin etc. would be kept aside. And in my view, here lies the **solution to puzzle of the Dasas and Dasyus**.

In **Rigved**, other than **Dasas** and **Dasyus**, there is no character that attacks the **Yajna** sites frequently but at different locations as well. In my opinion, just because of animal sacrifice, **Dasas** and **Dasyus** used to get attracted to **the Place of Yajna** and hence the **Priests** used to feel that their presence and behaviour spoil the purity of rite. Therefore, the **Priests used to hate them.** Otherwise, th**e Dasas** and **Dasyus** had no interest in **Yajna** and also had no personal enemity with the Priests or the Various Tribes of **Rigved** including Bharatas, Anus, Druhyus, Yadus, Turvasas, or Purus. In other words, just to eat remains of the animals that were killed for the sacrifice purpose was the sole and only attraction for the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** to go near the place of **Yajna**.

In following paragraphs, we would discuss about the typical features of the **Dasas** and **Dasyus** present in the various mandalas of Rigved. It should be noted here that, no one Hymn/Verse

of **Rigved** provides complete description on **Dasa** or **Dasyu**. Information about them is scattered in several verses, which also manifests that the **Different Priests** of **Different Mandalas** at **Different Locations** and **Era** have personally experienced menace of the **Dasas** and **Dasyus,** observed their behaviour very closely that has been refected through the **Different Hymns/Verses**.

## I. Important features of Dasas:

The **Sanskrit** word "**Dasa**" really means **slave** or **servant.** As Rigvedic **Dasas** were regularly hostile towards the rigvedic Priests, they can never be the **Slaves or Servants**. As described in [2], an animal resembling the **Domesticated Dog** is the only possibility of actual **Dasa** of Rigved. Some important characterstic features of the **Dasas** appear in **Rigved** that could provide necessary clues to unfold the mystery have been discussed in detail below;

**i. KrshnaYoni:** This term is found in Verse (Rv-2.20.7) of Mandala-2 and as per me, it is the first Mandala of **Rigved**. **Krshna-Yoni** is the combination of two independent Sanskrit words i.e. **Krshna** and **Yoni.**

Original meaning of the word "**Krshna**" is related to a colour; i.e."**Dark**" or '**Black**'. Now we shall see the examples of its uses in English,

"A **Dark** day" is a phrase sometimes used in English and its actual meaning is **Bad time.**

**"**A **Black** day**"** is a similar phrase but used in different context indicating Opposition to something or it also manifests a **Protest**.

Logically speaking, during **Night time**, when everything is covered by **Darkness**, use of word **Krshna** for the feature in **night** carries no meaning. Hence in my view, the Priests would have used it as the **Daytime** reference to show the contrast.

**Yoni** is the another word, its actual meanig is **Female Genitilia** or **Womb** but practically it could mean a **Chamber** or **Cavity having an opening/entrance.**

When we combine two words "**Krshna**" and **Yoni** to make totally new word **Krshna-Yoni** which could actually mean Daytime location of living or hiding of **Dasa**. Hence I find Griffith's translation of the word **Krshna-Yoni** as "**Dwelling in Darkness**" is the most appropriate. Based on the above point, an animal called **Hyena,** which also looks like **Domesticated Dog** is the only candidate to qualify as real **Dasa of Rigved.**

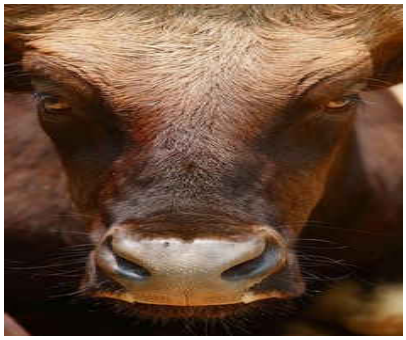
**Hyena** is a raw flesh eater, nocturnal animal who is active mainly during night but sometimes comes out of its den in the early morning hours. Figure-1, given below exhibit locations of dwellings, dens, burrow, natural caves, pits or hiding places of Hyenas during day time.

Figure-1, Dwellings of Hyenas/Dasas(All Photographs source-Internet/Public Domain)

**ii. Bull-jawed Dasa :** In the Verse **Rv-7.99,4, Sage Vasistha** has brought out a new feature of **Dasa. Griffith** has translated **Sanskrit** word**, *Vrsafiprá*** as **Bull-jawed Dasa.** In Hymn **Rv-7.99,** there is a mention of **Vishnu** defeating ***Sambara;*** **Bull-jawed Dasa** and destoying his ninety nine fenced castle. Some linguistic experts call ***Vrsafiprá*** as 'Bull-Lipped' or 'Bull-Faced'.

In my view, the term, Bull-Jawed practically expresses facial feature or face-look of a **Dasa**. Figure-2 shows Photographs of the Bulls and Dasas ( Source- Internet/Public Domain).

**Figure-2( Photographs A , B are of Bulls; and C and D of Hyenas)**



**A- Face of a Bull**

**B -Face of a Bull**

**C -Face of a Hyena**

**D- Face of a Hyena**

Except **Horn**, Shape of face or of facial view or Structural outlook of faces of both Bull and Hyena is quite similar but nowhere matches with the human-beings. Hence **Vasistha** would have described **Dasa** having shape of face as a Bull-Jaw or Bull-Face. Hence I find Griffith's Translation of ***Vrsafiprá*** as Bull's Jaw is close to reality.

Figure-3(A and B) depicts two images of **Bulldog** for reference only( Source-Internet)

**A**

**B**

iii. **Female Dasa :** In the Verse **Rv-5.30,9, Sage Atri** revealed a new thing about **Dasa** that is a **Female Dasa** (Stri Dasa) with her army was present at the site of Yajna. The priest would have idenfied **female Dasa** based on the presence of breasts to it. In case of human-beings, generally, it is the Men who are always on the forefront while tackeling enemies/ other animals but try to give protection to Women and Children. In case of animals, sometimes females become active in killing the prey e.g Lioness hunts and feeds its cubs. In Spotted Hyena species, females play dominent roles in the family. But in my view, unknowingly, Griffith has made mistake while translating Sanskrit word, Stri Dasa to Woman Dasa. Correct translation would be just Female Dasa.

iv. **Krsna Asedhadap:** In Rv-6.47,21, Bharadwaja described that Indra kills Sambara and Varchin Dasas when darkness goes means early morning when the light appears or the Sun arrives in the sky. This means to say that **Dasas/Hyenas** would have been around Yajna location either in the night or came in the early morning to eat the flesh of dead animals.

Figure-4a is shows angry Spotted Hyena and 4b exhibits Striped Hyena with two children

4a

4b

**v. krsna-garbha** : In verse, Rv-1.101,1 this term is used in connection with Sambara, Pipru and Susna Dasas. Some explained it as "pregnant with the Blacks," or Dark word of Dasas but in my view, it probably represents **Black Belly or Dark Stomach of Dasas.**

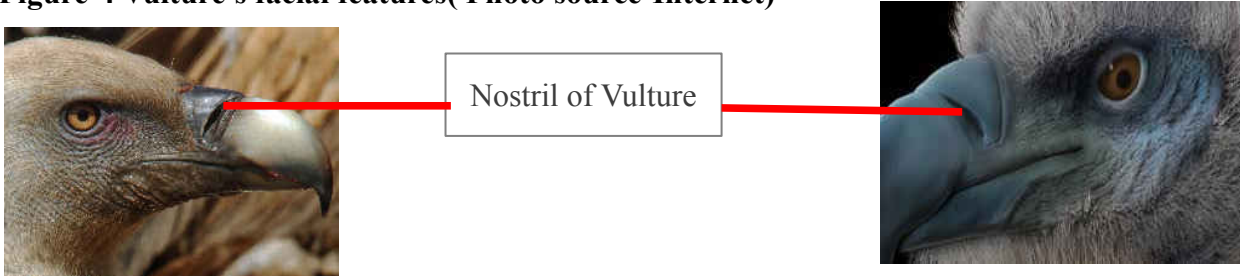
II. **Distinct features of Dasyus:**

Some experts have defined the term Dasyus as a “thief” but its dictionary meaning is Pirate, Monster etc. Now we shall focus on some typical characterstics of Dasyus or Vultures.

**i Anasa:** The verse, Rv-5.29,10; describes Dasyus as **Anasa.** It is the Sanskrit word that has been translated by many as Noseless or Flatnose person.

But look at the figure-4 below. A vulture has two slits/ ports/inlets at the beak-base/bill for breathing purpose. Griffith used Noseless term to define Anasa which is very close to the fact.

**Figure-4 Vulture's facial features( Photo source-Internet)**




**4 a** **4 b**

**ii. Krshna-twacha: Krshna** mean **black** or **dark** and **Twacha** or **tvac** means **skin.** Hence many Sanskrit scholars have translated 'krishnatvac' a compound word as a dark-skinned person. But some tried to identify it Black cover or exterior. By doing so, they tried to lable Dasyus as black aboriginal tribe that was aready existing in Indus Valley prior to arrival of Aryans. But Vultures found in Indian Sub-continent have black colour wings/external surface as shown in figure 5a and b

Figure-5 a and b showing grey/blackish colour outer surface of Vulture(Photo-Internet)

a

b

In my view, in **Rv-1.130,8**; by describing Dasyus as *tvacam krsna,* the Priests have identified the Dasyus/Vultures as a dark or black colour species. Verse Rv-9.41.1 referes to driving away black skin.

**iii. A-karma :**

Akarma word is mentioned in the verses Rv-10.22,8. **A-karma** is opposite of Sanskrit word **Karma**. Hence it is necessary to understand the meaning of Karma first. **Karma** usually means action, work or deed. But more precisely, it means the execution of action in an organised manner.

Here I am comparing **Yajna ceremonies** with the Live **Musical Orchestras/Concerts.** An Orchestra is usually led by a **Conductor** who directs the performance with movements using the hands and baton. The conductor unifies the orchestra, its rhythm and establishes proper Synchronization/coordination between the singers and the sounds of different instruments. The Conductors act as guides to the orchestras and/or choirs they conduct. In **Yajna** there is a **Main Priest** who supervises all the activites of Yajna ritual. Similar to Orchestra, in Yajna rite also already composed songs are sung by the main singers and they are supported by the chorus singers. To get the best out of them, both teams require to do regular practices or rehearsals under the guidance of **Conductor** or **Main Priest**. Apart from the actual perfomers, Yajna preparation requires many persons to support several activites such as making an Altar, collection of log or wood for fire, preparation of sacrificial items including killing animals for sacrifices etc. In other words, similar to Orchestra, for a successful performance of Yajna rite, there is a need of proper planning, execution, coordination, cooperation and logistic support from many corners. Hence the word **Karma** for Yajna function practically means completion of assigned task or discharging defined duties or fulfilling responsiblities or finishing work as per the deadline in an organised fashion.

But Dasyus are described as **A-karma**, probably means unlike the Priests or Yajna performers, who used to assemble at one place for a cause/worship, behave in an organised way, and act accordingly to accomplished the task; Dasyus had no planned or fixed work, no social responsibily and hence no goal to achieve but free to behave at their will.

**iv. A-vrata:** **A-vrata,** a Sanskrit word found in a few verses Rv-1.51,8; Rv-1.130,8; Rv-1.175,3; Rv-9. 41,2; and Rv-9.73,5. Many experts have translated it as Lawless or Riteless, follow alien law. The word, **A-vrata** is opposite of original Sanskrit word,**Vrata**, hence we need to understand probable meaning of **Vrata**.

Based on my understanding of day to day activities of present-day ritual performers, I feel, following points may be considerd as **Vrata** of the rigvedic time,

- All persons who are the actual participants in Yajna/Sacrifice or witnessing the same shall take proper bath before coming to Yajna site. Cleanliness is very essential.
- Persons who are going to participate Yajna ritual shall not eat any solid food before or during the worship but drinking Liquids like water, milk, and Soma juices are allowed.
- No person shall make any form of noise or unpleasent sound while chanting mantras or no cross-talk shall be allowed. Single minded devotion to Yajna is a must.
- After offering Prasadam or Naivadyam to the Dieties, means completion of Yajna ceremony in all respect, everyone can have cooked food.

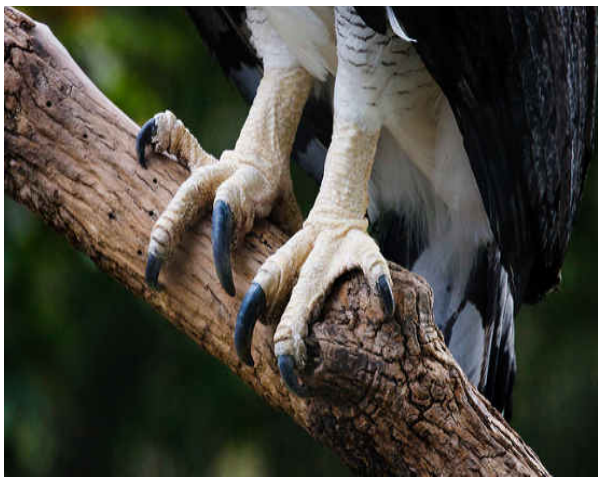
As Dasyus were only interested in eating raw flesh of the animals, that used to create ugly scene around the place of Yajna, hence the Priests would have defined them as Avrata or indesciplined lot who follow no well defined norms/rules in day to day life.

**v. Amanush** : Though many scholars have translated this Sanskrit word as Cruel, barbaric or inhuman, purely from behavioural point of view. Additionally, I interprete it, as the Dasyus did not belong to human race, they were called as **A-manush**. Though lived in a group, Dasyus did not believe in caring and sharing principles, but just to have more raw meat, they probably would be attacking each other and sometimes injuring or killing each other also, from that angle-**Amanush**.

**vi. Mrdhravach:** *This Sanskrit word is present in some verses; Rv-1.174,2; Rv-5.29,10; Rv-5.32, 8; Rv-7.6,3; Rv-7.18,13; and Rv-10.23,5 .The Experts have defined it as Hostile speakers or Rudely speaking or evil or bad speakers or foul speech. My opinion is that it means unknown language speakers who used to quarrel with each others for food and express hostility towards the Priests.*

**Vii**. **Wide-spreading Foot**: Sanskrit word, **Vaturina Pada** present in Rv-1.133,2 probably means wide-spreading foot. This type of foot is usually found in the Big birds and some wild animals but not in human-beings. In the verse, Rv-1.133,2 it is mentioned that Indra has **MahaVaturina Pada** i.e. very big foot than the Dasyus, hence ***He*** is capable to crush or defeat them using his very special foot.

Figure-6 a and b showing **claws of Vulture**.



6a

6b

Griffith has translated **Vaturina Pada** quite accurately. The verse content points out that to show superiority of **Indra** over the Dasyus, the Poet described that ***He*** has Very big/huge **wide-spread foot** than them, and that can be used as a weapon to defeat/crush them in a battle.

**Viii. Distant Dwelling:** In verse Rv-1.63,4; the composer has highlighted this typical feature of the Dasyus. Vultures generally make their nests in a mountain cliff or on a tall tree so that it can't be easily accessed by other animals. They make their nests using thick sticks so that an egg laid by a feamle would remain in the nest despite blowing wind. Following photographs (Figure-7 a to e) taken from Internet would give proper idea about Distant Dwelling aspects of Vultures.

**Figure-7 a: showing a high mountain where vultures generally make their nests**

**Figure -7b showing a vulture in a cliff**

**Fig-7c Two vultures with a chick in a nest**

**Figure-7d**

**Figure-7e**

**Figure-7d and e exhibiting nests built by Vultures on the tall trees using sticks**

**III. Meaning of some selected terms used for defining Dasas and Dasyus in Rigved:**

Some selected Sanskrit terms/prhases, that are related to the characters of **Dasas** and **Dasyus**, found in various verses of the different mandalas are explained below,

**A-yajvanam** (Rv-8.70,11)**:** perform no sacrifice at all.
**A-Brahma(** Rv-4.16,9 :Not knowing purpose of life or can't sing a song in praise of God.
**A-Yajyun**( Rv-7.6,3): Live without Yajna or sacrifices
**Anya-vratam** (Rv-8.70,11; Rv-10.22, 8): follow other norms or other values or way of life.
**Visho-adaivehi** (Rv-8.96,15): tribe without god
**An-indra (without god Indra)**(Rv-10.27,6; and R-10.48,7): Indra-less on non-believer of Indra
**Maya :** Magic art – a trick or method used to deceive others
**Varna -** used for Dasas in verses Rv-1.104, 2 and Rv-2.12,4: In my view, it should be taken as **generic term** similar to **Animal** or **Bird** or **Mammal** or **Reptile** etc. But modern-day experts have confined its application for the human-beings and have specifically used it to describe the various human tribes or races and hence it has created confusion in interpretation of Rigved. It could actually be used to describe **class** or **category** of any living things but not as the specific indicator of different human tribes/races only.
**Varnam-** used in Rv-3.34,9 for Aryans to differentiate from Dasyus

**Arya and Dasa** : Although Arya and Dasa/Dasyu have been shown at the loggerhead with each others in many verses of Rigved, we will now look into the Griffith translated verse, **Rv-10.38,3** as a case study for the same;

*The Godeless man, much lauded **Indra**, whether he be **Dasa** or be **Arya** who would war with us, Easy to conquer he for thee, with us these foes with thee may we subdue in the clash of fight.*

Here, the composer has described an unknown character as an enemy of the Priests who does not believe in **Indra** whether happens to be **Arya** or **Dasa**. After reading it first time, one would definitely get confused and might conclude that both **Arya** and **Dasa** have been considered as the human-beings. Then the question is, If both were belonging to human race (one class), then why did the composer differentiate them at all? But in my view, in the verse, only from a non-believer (An-Indra) point of view, both **Arya** and **Dasa** have been treated at par. Here, the composer feels that as **Indra** is on their side, the Priests can subdue anyone( An-Indra)) in fight and conquer them easily. In other words, the verse, **Rv-10.38,3;** portrays that throughtout the rigvedic period, there was an on-going fight between the **Believers and non-believers of Indra.**

It means to say that at that time, along with **Dasas/Dasyus**, there were some non-believer **Aryans(** the people having different occupations such as traders, herders, craftsmen and some tribe leaders living around) as well, and some of them used to clash with the Priests. That is why, in my opinion, at some places, the term, **Arya/Aryans,** referes to all human-beings also. But within the class of human race, the Priests have used **Arya** term to project them and their sponsors who believe in worship, as the High-born or Noble or Superior to other common people of society.

**Ayas-Pura or fort of metal**: It is another Sanskrit phrase that has been misinterpreeted often. The Experts of earlier time including Griffith have considered the word, **Ayas** as **Iron metal** only and hence in many verses of **Rigved,** translated by Griffith**,** we find "**Indra** destroying several **Iron forts/castles** of **Dasas** and **Dasyus**". But **Ayas** should be taken as a generic term and its common meaning is **Metal**. Practical meaning of Ayas-Pura is the places of living that are as strong as metal. In reality, it means the **Stone Caves** or **Mountain Cliffs** where the Dasas and Dasyus used to dwell.

This indirectly reveals the fact that rigvedic Priests would be living in the ordinary houses made from wood or mud or thatched huts, were not as strong as the natural rock or stone caves/ mountain cliffs i.e. dweellings of the Dasas and Dasyus. The Priests would be living simple lifestyle, very similar to ascetic life, mostly using earthen pots, but deeply involved in worship. Ayas or metal fort was not a part of their lifestyle, hence they mentioned it as a very special thing.

## Information on Hyenas and Vultures :

As per my understanding, **Dasas** of **Rigved** are nothing but the actual **Hyenas** and **Dasyus** are the real **Vultures,** then it becomes necessary to know more about them. Following paragraphs give brief introduction about them.

**Hyenas (Dasas):** The Hyenas look-like domesticated Dogs, generally found in some parts of Africa and Asia continents including Indian Sub-continent. Though hyenas resemble the big dogs, in real sense, they are more closer to cat family animals like lions and tigers. There are four known species of Hyena, the spotted hyena, the striped hyena, the brown hyena and the aardwolf. Hyenas have a wide diet range and are both hunters and scavengers. Some Hyenas catch their own prey but others survive as the scavengers. It is said that due to strong jaws filled with huge teeth, hyenas can crush the bones/horn, teeth, hooves of the dead animals and digest them very easily. It is also said that the Hyenas can smell the dead and decaying flesh of an animal from around 3-5 kilometers distance.

**Hyenas** conduct most of their activity in the hours around dawn and dusk. Generally, hyenas move in darkness hence termed as the nocturnal animals and prefer to eat at night. During daytime, when resting, they can be found lying around the communal dens/burrows/natural stone caves. In spotted hyena clan, a female hyena is bigger in size, more aggressive than male and plays a dominent role in keeping the clan together.

Some hyenas can produce range of vocal sounds and they use them while communicating with each others or expressing an anger. With sharp vision, acute hearing, and a keen sense of smell, hyenas patrol their territory mostly at night. Hyenas are social animals and they live in clans of up to 80 animals. Hyenas are difficult to tame.

**Vultures ( Dasyus)**: Indian vultures are described as the robust and scruffy scavenger, mainly feed on carrion. They make their nests in small colonies that strech to two to three feet using sticks and rubbish on the mountain cliffs, urban ruins or abandoned buildings or on the tall trees. They generally move in flocks in search of food and feed on the carcass of the dead animals. Vultures do not mind in living close proximity of humans.

Vultures are described as the "**Nature's sanitation workers who always look for the job and finish it fast without any hesitation".** In olden days, in India, the Vultures used to play important role of the scavanger and cleaned up of most of the dead animals and hence very helpful in upkeeping the surrounding. Due to their very sharp eyesight, when in flight itself, they can detect and locate the carcasses very easily. Then one by one they land on the ground and start eating remains of the dead animal immediately. It has been reported that once a pack of vultures had cleaned up a whole bullock in about 20 minutes. They can digest meat in any stage of decay, and withstand diseases that would kill any other creature. Vultures can reach to a height of 7,000 feet and can easily cover distance of more than 100 km in one go. These birds make cackling, grunting and hissing sounds.

**Hyenas and Dasyus Combination**: When we separately consider the **Hyenas,** we find them as the land based Mammals who generally move at night, directly deliver the babies and can eat both raw flesh and bones of the dead animals. When we take into account the **Vultures** independently**,** we see that they belong to a family of Bird, one of the most powerful flyers, usually active during daytime, lay eggs and can eat even decayed flesh of the dead-ones. But both have some common features as well. Basically, both Hyenas and Vultures are the excellent scavangers, make their dwellings in natural stone caves (Hyena) or cliffs (Vulture) in the mountaneous regions. Both do not mind coming together to eat at one place and also in presence of other wild animals, sometimes human-beings too. When I reconstructed the past in front of my eyes and imagined that the animals were being sacrificed during the rigvedic period at the site of Yajna, then I realised that **Dasas** are nothing but actually **Hyenas** and **Dasyus** are real **Vultures** in the minds of the rigvedic Priests. But both were uninvited guests, whose presence and behaviour at the site used to spoil the purity of

Yajna ritual. Since well before the completion of Yajna rite, they used to start eating the remains of the animals whose flesh was meant for the Deites of the Priests' imagination, the Priests purposely termed these unholy trouble creators as the Asuras, Rakshasas/demons/devils/fiends etc.

**Figure-8,( a to f** )shows presence of Hyenas and Vultures together eating flesh of dead animal.

( All Photographs are from African Jungles and their source is – Internet/public domain)

a- Hyenas and Vultures near dead Zebra

b- Hyenas and Vultures at one place

c- a Hyena chasing a Vulture

d- a red faced Hyena and many vultures

e- Heynas and vultures near Zebra's body

f- many vultures and a hyena near dead Hippo

Keeping all aforesaid information in the back of mind, now I request the readers to go through the **Hymn-104** of **Mandala-7** and decide themselves whether it provides sufficient clues for the real **Dasas** and **Dasyus** of the **Rigved** or not.

Additionally, the readers may also read the Hymn-**RV-10.87**.

### Hymn Rv-7.104 addressed to Indra and Soma (Griffith Translation)

*1. INDRA and Soma, burn, destroy the demon foe, send downward, O ye Bulls, those who add gloom to gloom.*
*Annihilate the fools, slay them and burn them up: chase them away from us, pierce the voracious ones.*
*2. Indra and Soma, let sin round the wicked boil like as a caldron set amid the flames of fire.*
*Against the foe of prayer, devourer of raw flesh, the vile fiend fierce of eye, keep ye perpetual hate.*
*3. Indra and Soma, plunge the wicked in the depth, yea, cast them into darkness that hath no support,*
*So that not one of them may ever thence return: so may your wrathful might prevail and conquer them.*
*4. Indra and Soma, hurl your deadly crushing bolt down on the wicked fiend from heaven and from the earth.*
*Yea, forge out of the mountains your celestial dart wherewith ye burn to death the waxing demon race.*
*5. Indra and Soma, cast ye downward out of heaven your deadly darts of stone burning with fiery flame,*
*Eternal, scorching darts; plunge the voracious ones within the depth, and let them sink without a sound.*
*6. Indra and Soma, let this hymn control you both, even as the girth encompasses two vigorous steeds-*
*The song of praise which I with wisdom offer you: do ye, as Lords of men, animate these my prayers.*
*7. In your impetuous manner think ye both thereon: destroy these evil beings, slay the treacherous fiends.*
*Indra and Soma, let the wicked have no bliss who evermore assails us with malignity.*
*8. Whoso accuses me with words of falsehood when I pursue my way with guileless spirit,*
*May he, the speaker of untruth, be, Indra, like water which the hollowed hand compresses.*
*9. Those who destroy, as is their wont, the simple, and with their evil natures barm the righteous,*
*May Soma give them over to the serpent, or to the lap of Nirrti consign them.*
*10. The fiend, O Agni, who designs to injure the essence of our food, kine, steeds, or bodies,*
*May he, the adversary, thief, and robber, sink to destruction, both himself and offipring.*
*11. May he be swept away, himself and children: may all the three earths press him down beneath them.*
*May his fair glory, O ye Gods, be blighted, who in the day or night would fain destroy us.*
*12. The prudent finds it easy to distinguish the true and false: their words oppose each other.*
*Of these two that which is the true and honest, Soma protects, and brings the false to nothing.*
*13. Never doth Soma aid and guide the wicked or him who falsely claims the Warrior's title.*
*He slays the fiend and him who speaks untruly: both lie entangled in the noose of Indra.*
*14. As if I worshipped deities of falsehood, or thought vain thoughts about the Gods, O Agni.*
*Why art thou angry with us, Jatavedas? Destruction fall on those who lie against thee!*
*15. So may I die this day if I have harassed any man's life or if I be a demon.*
*Yea, may he lose all his ten sons together who with false tongue hath called me Yatudhana.*
*16. May Indra slay him with a mi weapon, and let the vilest ofghty all creatures perish,*
*The fiend who says that he is pure, who calls me a demon though devoid of demon nature.*
*17. She too who wanders like an owl at night-time, hiding her body in her guile and malice,*
*May she fall downward into endless caverns. May press-stones with loud ring destroy the demons.*
*18. Spread out, ye Maruts, search among the people: seize ye and grind the Raksasas to pieces,*
*Who fly abroad, transformed to birds, at night-time, or sully and pollute our holy worship.*
*19. Hurl down from heaven thy bolt of stone, O Indra: sharpen it, Maghavan, made keen by Soma.*
*Forward, behind, and from above and under, smite down the demons with thy rocky weapon.*
*20. They fly, the demon dogs, and, bent on mischief, fain would they harm indomitable Indra.*
*Sakra makes sharp his weapon for the wicked: now, let him cast his bolt at fiendish wizards.*
*21. Indra hath ever been the fiends' destroyer who spoil oblations of the Gods' invokers:*
*Yea, Sakra, like an axe that spilts the timber, attacks and smashes them like earthen vessels.*
*22. Destroy the fiend shaped like an owl or owlet, destroy him in the form of dog or cuckoo.*
*Destroy him shaped as eagle or as vulture as with a stone, O Indra, crush the demon.*
*23. Let not the fiend of witchcraft-workers reach us: may Dawn drive off the couples of Kimidins.*
*Earth keep us safe from earthly woe and trouble: from grief that comes from heaven mid-air preserve us.*
*24. Slay the male demon, Indra! slay the female, joying and triumphing in arts of magic.*
*Let the fools' gods with bent necks fall and perish, and see no more the Sun when he arises.*
*25. Look each one hither, look around Indra and Soma, watch ye well.*

In the Hymns-Rv-7.104 and Rv-10.87, we find some similar characters such as Rakshasas, Kimidin, Yatudhana and Pishach who are the adversaries of the Preists and the flesh eaters. Now compare the two verses that are given below; taken from aforementioned two hymns of two different mandalas (Mandala-7 is one of the five Early Mandalas and Mandala-10 is the last mandala), have been composed by the different Poets, at different rigvedic period.

**Rv-7.104,10:** *The fiend, O Agni, who designs to injure the essence of* ***our food****,* ***kine, steeds, or bodies****,*

*May he, t****he adversary, thief, and robber,*** *sink to destruction, both himself and offipring.*

**Rv-10.87,16:** *The fiend who smears himself with* ***flesh of cattle****, with* ***flesh of horses*** *and of* ***human bodies****,*

*Who steals the milch-cow's milk away, O Agni,-tear off the heads of such with fiery fury.*

In my opinion, the two demonic or evil features mentioned in **Rigved** are nothing but the real Hyenas (Dasas) and Vultures (Dasyus). Just because the Priests could do nothing to them, they imagined that their Deites Indra, Ashvin, Marut, Agni etc would protect them from the evils. Occasionally, the Priests would have used burning wood to drive them away, hence in some verses, it is described that **Agni** provided the protection to Arya. But the Priests were unable to control the activities of a Vulture as it used to snatch a piece of flesh and fly away. When faces/mouths of hyenas and vultures used to get coloured/soaked with the blood of dead animals, they would be appearing very fearsome (deadly looking creatures) to the Priests (Similar to the drawn/painted pictures of Vampires showing blood trickling down or oozing out of their mouths. Some mythological texts describe that a Vampire can fly like a Bat or attack like a Wolf). Hence the frightened Priests used to pray to God Indra, Rudra, Marut etc to do something and save them from the attacks of these Kimidins , Pishach or Rakshasas or Yatudhanas (appearing like Vampires).

## Summary:

The **Dasas** and **Dasyus** mentioned in the **Rigved** are not the original inhabitants (two different tribes of the human-beings as believed by many), but the two different carnivorous animals who used to arrive at the place of Yajna just to eat the remains or flesh of the animals being sacrified during Yajna rite. In reality, **Dasas** are the **Hyenas** and **Dasyus** are the **Vultures** who are the excellent scavengers by nature.

## References:

**1. "The Hymns of Rig Veda", Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896) in PDF format.**

**2. "Rigved & Indus-Saraswati Valley Civilization: Inking the Link", by VR Patil ( this article is available in the Public Domain/Internet)**

**3. All Photographs and general information- sourced from Internet/Public domain**